

31 October 1968

SUBJECT: Attachment to Memorandum on Cambodia as a Source of
VC/NVA Arms and Ammunition

Discussion of the Evidence

I. THE OVERLAND SUPPLY ROUTE

A. Capabilities of the Overland Supply Routes

1. There should be no serious doubt over Communist capabilities to move supplies overland to III Corps even though this may be an arduous effort. The truck routes from North Vietnam to southern Laos has been constantly improved since 1965 and are now capable of sustaining some traffic throughout the rainy season. These routes are subject to bombing of choke points, mining, and armed reconnaissance. But pilot sightings and road watch reports confirm continued movement. Truck traffic to southern Laos is estimated to have delivered an average of 180 tons per day during the period January-September 1968, double the amount moved during the comparable period in 1967.

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

25X1

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

2. From southern Laos there extends a network of trails running on both sides of the Cambodian/Vietnamese border and through the known Communist base areas all the way south to Quang Duc and Phuoc Long Provinces. These trails are supplemented by motorable tracks and roads in some areas. From Phuoc Long westward around to the Parrot Beak, there are many long established highways as well as many trails built by the Communists.

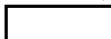
3. The manpower required to porter supplies from southern Laos along these trails to III Corps would not be excessive. Arms and ammunition requirements in III Corps, even at the expanded 1968 levels, only amount to about 7 tons per day. Using impressed mountain tribesmen and logistic troops, this movement could be accomplished with a total labor force of not more than 3,000 men.

B. Operation of the Overland Supply Movement

4. The evidence for the onward movement of supplies from Laos to III Corps is less clear cut than the capability and involves more exotic and complicated evidence. Generally, we know that back in 1961, COSVN advised Hanoi that it had a supply route established northward to Laos joining the Ho Chi Minh trail

- 2 -


T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



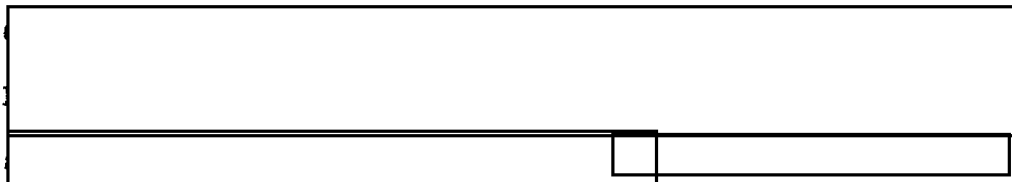
25X1



25X1


and was ready to receive supplies. We know that COSVN has several Rear Area Support Groups which handle the internal distribution of supplies in III Corps. 


25X1



25X1

25X1

 is quite clear in establishing that B-3 Front gets its arms and ammunition from the Laotian panhandle; other prisoner reports suggest, but do not prove conclusively that supplies move further south from B-3 Front to III Corps. There is a recent report from MACV of friendly forces shelling vehicles moving southward in the Duc Lap area (Quang Duc Province).

5. Most of the reporting from the III Corps area itself indicates supplies move in directions that suggest an origin to the north. A particular case is the movement of arms to the notorious village of Ba Thu in the southeastern extremity of the Parrots Beak.  a well defined "supply corridor" running to Ba Thu from the northwest along the Svay Rieng border. If arms were coming from Sihanoukville or Phnom Penh, the logical axis of movement would be along Route 1 directly from the west.

25X1

- 3 -


T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T




25X1

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



6. There are literally hundreds of bits and pieces of evidence which support the picture of active supply movements from Laos southward to III Corps. Beyond this, however, one is faced with the implications of the continued and determined efforts to expand the Laotian system and 

 road construction southward from the tri-border area. The Communists have enjoyed almost complete control of both sides of the border from Laos to Phuoc Long and of many Vietnamese villages on the Cambodian side the remainder of the way to the Parrots Beak for years. If they had not developed and used "supply corridors" along this North-South axis it would be totally inconsistent with their confirmed practice in I and II Corps.

II. THE CAMBODIAN SUPPLY ROUTE

A. Capabilities

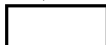
7. A secure and reliable system for moving arms and ammunition into Cambodia by sea and forward by truck would avoid losses enroute, require less manpower, and would permit faster delivery. Assuming that large or regular deliveries were made

- 4 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

by Communist ships calling at Sihanoukville, the amounts that could be delivered would far exceed the capacity of the overland route via Laos and, indeed, the requirements of the Communist forces.

8. Even without a secure system for delivery at Sihanoukville, the Vietnamese Communists probably have the capacity to organize the necessary truck transport to move any arms that might be bought or stolen from Cambodian Army depots or to transport any arms that could be smuggled in over the coast.

9. In short, the capacities of Cambodian ports, roads, canals, rivers, truck parks, etc. are not in question.

B. Arrangements for Arms Movements

10. Based on the available reporting, we can postulate several types of arrangements for arms movements from Cambodia. First is relatively small-scale smuggling with only low level Cambodian involvement. There is a great deal of evidence for this; minor gun running with the connivance of Cambodian border officials, particularly in the Delta, has probably been going on for years. Second is a fairly well organized system for the import through Sihanoukville of important quantities of arms

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



which are then trucked to various border points. This movement would involve at least middle level Cambodian officials and fairly expensive bribery all along the route. Third, is an arrangement, at a high level, for the inclusion of arms packets for the VC/NVA in every shipment of arms to the Cambodian Army from Communist China and even the USSR.



12. Taken together and without further analysis, this becomes an impressive and disturbing body of evidence. It requires and deserves the most careful consideration, and more important, continued follow-up in an effort to obtain more specific data and less hearsay and speculative opinion.

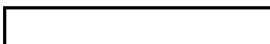
- 6 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T

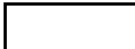


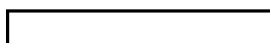
25X1

13. At the moment, however, I consider the case of the high level deal as not proven. It would not be logical for the Communists to entrust vital supply channels to the unreliable Sihanouk when they have an alternate overland route under their full control. It would not be consistent with Sihanouk's basically neutral posture to risk getting caught out in military complicity with the Viet Cong. The existence of such a deal would also appear to be inconsistent with Sihanouk's other efforts 

25X1

25X1

 to reduce arms smuggling and to limit Communist activities inside his borders. Some of the reports themselves are suspect in that they come from sources not likely to have access to sensitive Cambodian state secrets.

14. Beyond these arguments in logic, we do not have good evidence of actual arms movements in the volume implied to South Vietnam. Much of the evidence is hearsay;  who see trucks heavily laden moving "northward" to Snoul and Mondulkiri do not actually see arms on the trucks and cannot say in any event that these movements are not in support of the Cambodian Army. Nor can be sure that some of the trucks in question are not simply taking the best road to Kratie and Stung Treng Provinces. The internal requirements of the Cambodian economy

25X1

- 7 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

are often neglected in discussing truck movements as are the known and accepted facts of large-scale rice shipments and other non-lethal supplies to the Communists.

15. No one knows for certain how many tons of arms enter Sihanoukville or what the consumption, equipping, and stock pile requirements of the Cambodian Army may be.

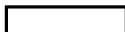
16. There is a more consistent body of reporting to the effect that some middle-level Cambodian officials are engaged in smuggling arms into the country or in the diversion of stocks from Army depots. The quantities involved could be helpful to the Communists, but it seems most unlikely that they would place primary reliance on such uncertain sources for arms and ammunition.

25X1



- 8 -

T-O-P S-E-C-R-E-T



25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79R00967A001200030013-2

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79R00967A001200030013-2

S-E-C-R-E-T/

25X1

31 October 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Cambodia as a Source of VC/NVA Arms and Ammunition

SUMMARY and CONCLUSIONS

1. The extensive Communist use of Cambodia territory adjacent to South Vietnam for sanctuary for troops and for the transport and storage of military supplies is not in dispute. Nor is the fact that large quantities of rice and other non-lethal supplies are shipped from Cambodia to the VC/NVA forces.* Indeed, dependence of Communist forces in the Highlands and in parts of III Corps on Cambodian rice may be close to critical.

2. It has also long been agreed that the Communists smuggle "small" quantities of arms from Cambodia; some of this probably representing unauthorized diversions from the arms being imported by the Cambodian Government for its own forces. But the intelligence community, at the national level, has not in the past, found

* SNIE 57/1-67, dated 14 December 1967; SNIE 57-67, 19 January 1967 and ER IM 68-84.

25X1

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

convincing evidence of "large-scale" diversions from these Cambodian stockpiles or of any "substantial" movement of arms into Cambodia, with or without Sihanouk's cognizance, for clandestine delivery to the Communists in Vietnam.

3. These judgments concerning the movement of arms and ammunition are again at issue; in particular it is being argued that Communist forces in III Corps now rely primarily on lines of communication entering Cambodia by sea and extending east and north to the Vietnamese border for their supply of arms and ammunition. The opposing case is that the primary supply route for movement of arms and ammunition to III Corps extends overland from North Vietnam through Laos, the tri-border area, and southward on a network of trails and road segments along the Cambodian-Vietnamese border to the III Corps area.

4. Neither case can be proven or disproven beyond all doubt with the evidence currently at hand. There is however a more substantial body of evidence to support the case for primary reliance on the overland route. This conclusion is reinforced by additional military and political considerations involving not fact but judgment.

- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

25X1

25X1

5. This is not to say, however, that the Communists obtain no arms from Cambodia. The bulk of the arms for IV Corps may come by sea; some may still escape [] detection and enter directly, while other shipments probably are smuggled ashore in Cambodia and moved overland to the border. While it is less clear from the evidence, Communist forces in III Corps probably benefit from diversions from Cambodian army stocks and other smuggling activities. Even if the quantities involved were relatively large, however, they would still constitute a supplementary source and a convenience. If such arms were no longer available, the overland system would continue to exist with a functioning capacity adequate to meet Communist requirements in III Corps for arms and ammunition.

25X1

[]
[]
[] Member
Board of National Estimates

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79R00967A001200030013-2

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2007/03/06 : CIA-RDP79R00967A001200030013-2

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

The attached note may be of interest to you. It is, as it says, an informal and essentially uncoordinated report, and ought not be to be distributed outside the Agency.

ABBOT SMITH
Director
National Estimates

Copies to:
DCI, DDCI, DDI, DDP

30 October 1968
(DATE)

FORM NO. 101 REPLACES FORM 10-101
1 AUG 54 WHICH MAY BE USED.

(47)